

November 1, 2003

I am pleased to present the accomplishments of the Houston Fire Department from October 2000 through January 2004. The January 2004 date is included to accommodate a couple of projects that have not been completed as of this date. An example is the Incident Command School that is set to open in late November when all the new furniture arrives from the vendor. This timeframe also represents my tenure as fire chief of the Department. I will be retiring from HFD on January 6, 2004. I am very proud of our firefighters and civilian employees. HFD accomplished more during these three years than at anytime in my 25-year career.

While there are many things to do in HFD in the days ahead, it is appropriate to step back periodically and review how the organization has performed. Our customers, the two million citizens of Houston, have been well served by HFD. A review of the first three accomplishments on an individual basis would be considered outstanding successes and placed the organization in an excellent light. However, we knew that HFD could do more and further exceed the expectations of our customers. The members of HFD have done that in a big way.

I have no doubt that these successes place the Department's employees in an excellent position to be rewarded for their diligence by the citizens of this great city. We live in a country that rewards those that work hard and provide a service that exceeds their expectations. HFD provides a critical public safety service that needs to be performed with excellence. When Mrs. Smith (customer) calls for our service, she is probably having one of the worst days of her life. Houston firefighters must execute their duties with competence and compassion. Our customer satisfaction ratings quantify that this occurs the vast majority of the time. I have no doubt that our members will receive compensation enhancements in the future because of this approach to service and the many accomplishments listed in the attachment.

I wish the next fire chief all the best and hope he or she will lead the organization toward making even greater improvements in the future. The demands of our profession are getting more complicated and necessitate an aggressive leadership approach to meet the many challenges that lay ahead. May God continue to bless the Houston Fire Department!

Chris Connealy
Fire Chief

MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS for the HOUSTON FIRE DEPARTMENT October 2000 through January 2004

- HFD became the largest accredited fire department in the world, and 1 of only 56 fire departments to achieve this status. The Commission on Fire Accreditation International accredited the Houston Fire Department in March 2001.
- HFD's fire suppression services and the City of Houston's water distribution system was evaluated by the Insurance Services Office (ISO) and rated the city for improvement from a Class 3 Property Protection Classification to a Class 2 in December 2001. The ISO rating scale is 1 to 10, with 1 being the best. This represented in an average savings for homeowner insurance of approximately 8%. Commercial insurance savings ranged from 5 to 26%. There are just over 300 agencies among the almost 45,000 municipalities to have a Class 2 rating. HFD was not satisfied with a Class 2 and worked aggressively to achieve a Class 1 rating. This was achieved in April 2003. HFD became the largest Class 1 fire department in the United States. There are only 47 Class 1 fire departments among the 45,000 rated agencies. This provided an additional 2% savings on commercial insurance. The improvement from a Class 3 to a Class 1 rating represents millions dollars of savings for homeowner and business insurance policyholders. The accreditation and ISO rating improvements further validates the improvements in HFD by these independent third parties.
- HFD has worked very hard to improve EMS services. The paramedic squad program was initiated in December 2000 with excellent results. Due to increasing service demands, 15 paramedic squads, and 11 additional ambulances were placed in service. Two medical service units, staffed with 2 EMTs, were placed in service for both airports. A quality assurance program was implemented and fully staffed to further evaluate various performance measures in EMS. Customer satisfaction rates improved to 96.8% for EMS calls for service. A contract was approved that enhances paramedic training with Baylor College of Medicine for skill improvements related to intubating patients. A credentialing program was instituted for paramedics and EMTs to provide more scenario-based training and increased scrutiny by department physicians on technical skills of department members. HFD contracted with Baylor College of Medicine to staff the telemetry center. This allowed HFD paramedics to transfer out of telemetry and increase staffing on EMS units in the field. All of these changes resulted in dramatic improvements in the cardiac resuscitation and survivability rates to be among the very best in the United States.

2001	V-Fib		ASYSTOLE	
Cardiac Data 2001				
	Total	% Rate	Total	% Rate
Return of Spontaneous Circulation	213	61.4%	274	31.1%
Admitted to Hospital	124	35.7%	133	15.1%
Discharged from Hospital Alive	55	15.9%	12	1.4%

2002	V-Fib		ASYSTOLE	
Cardiac Data 2002				
	Total	% Rate	Total	% Rate
Return of Spontaneous Circulation	182	60.3%	288	34.3%
Admitted to Hospital	136	45.0%	158	18.8%
Discharged from Hospital Alive	62	20.5%	34	4.1%

- HFD began staffing a minimum of 70% of all ALS units with two paramedics in 2003.
- HFD created its first strategic plan in 1999 and was an impetus for the City of Houston creating a citywide strategic plan. An updated strategic plan incorporating the TriData, Red Ribbon Committee, and Accreditation reports was completed in 2003.
- HFD created its first comprehensive risk analysis of the city in 2000 to evaluate an appropriate matching of resources to population and infrastructure capacity. This analysis was updated in 2003 to include 2002 data.
- HFD developed an aggressive three-year Firefighter Safety Plan as an outcome of the four line-of-duty deaths.
- HFD created the first master calendar that defines reporting deadlines for all reports due throughout the department over the year.
- A thermal imager camera operating guideline was issued in 2003 as part of the Firefighter Safety Plan.
- The city has approved firefighter pension enhancements during the 2001 and 2003 legislative session.
- HFD was given good reviews by the TriData Corporation and Mayor Brown's Red Ribbon Committee on the one-year review since the initial release of these two reports that reviewed HFD operations in 2000. Both entities acknowledged the great improvement in HFD by the implementation of numerous recommendations.

- HFD participated in the operational needs to open the new Houston Emergency Communications Center. The department will have new computer assisted dispatch hardware and software, along with a new records management system.
- HFD replaced the radio microwave system to alert fire stations with the Emergency Alerting System (EAS) in May 2003.
- Mobile data computers were installed in emergency apparatus during 2003. This will facilitate operational enhancements for firefighters.
- The Get Alarmed Houston Program was initiated in 2001 with the goal of partnering with the corporate community, religious and neighborhood leaders, and HFD to install smoke detectors with 10-year batteries in areas of the city having the highest civilian fire deaths. HFD, working with our partners, has installed 8,532 smoke detectors. There was a 10% reduction of fire deaths when comparing 2001 to 2002.
- HFD received a \$492,000 grant in 2002 to assist in the purchase of a personnel accountability system to enhance firefighter safety at emergency incidents. Implemented July 2003. This is part of the Firefighter Safety Plan.
- HFD has made it a high priority to be involved with the community to follow your lead towards community-oriented government. A Community Outreach Command was established in 1998. In 2001, HFD instituted the Adopt-a-School Program to help mentor elementary children. Every elementary school in the city was adopted by each fire station and shift. Community service projects are required by each station and shift on a weekly basis. HFD participates with HPD in the monthly Positive Interaction Program meetings.
- The Texas Fire Marshal's Office and the Head Start Program recognized the HFD Juvenile Firesetter Intervention Program for its excellence. HFD personnel have provided instruction to organizations throughout the state. Houston and Harris County have partnered to provide a regional response to the juvenile firesetter problem in our community.
- As part of the Firefighter Safety Plan, all fire apparatus have been staffed with four firefighters since November 2001.
- As part of the Firefighter Safety Plan, standard operating guidelines have been significantly revised or created every 18 months since 1998. Guidelines that have been updated or created since 2002 include: the Rapid Intervention Teams and Survivability, May-Day, Fireground Personnel Accountability, High-Rise Firefighting, Weapons of Mass Destruction (implemented in 2003), Emergency Mobilization, and HFD's response to a Department of Homeland Security Code Red Terrorism Alert (issued in 2003).

- An Automatic Fire Alarm Ordinance was approved in 2003 to help reduce the excessive amounts of automatic false alarm responses.
- An advanced air pack techniques – air management course will be developed in 2003 as part of the Firefighter Safety Plan.
- In FY2000, HFD purchased a new Rehabilitation truck to provide cooling fans, snacks and drinks, and restroom facilities at incidents to provide comfort to firefighters and a state-of-the-art foam pumper to enhance hazardous materials mitigation operations.
- In FY2003, as part of the Firefighter Safety Plan, HFD purchased 400 portable radios to update inventory.
- In CY2002, HFD purchased 160 additional air packs, 30-minute and 1-hour air bottles, and face pieces for each firefighter to further improve firefighter safety.
- HFD received a \$750,000 grant in addition to the \$300,000 match in 2002 to purchase exercise equipment for every fire station to enhance the department's wellness program for employees. This is part of the Firefighter Safety Plan.
- HFD assisted in the evacuation and rescue of over 10,000 citizens during Tropical Storm Allison. HFD did an excellent job of managing this event.
- HFD has mandated that all 3,069 emergency operation firefighters take the two-day Saving Our Own class. This mandatory program started in 2003 and will be completed over the next three years. This is part of the Firefighter Safety Plan.
- All firefighters are provided 24-hours of continuing education each month since 1998. This is part of the Firefighter Safety Plan.
- Multi-company drills are provided monthly at the Val Jhanke Training Facility (VJTF) for all emergency operations firefighters. This has been done since 1998 and is part of the Firefighter Safety Plan.
- The Houston Medical Strike Team has received quarterly training, since September 2001, to enhance our response to weapons of mass destruction incidents. This is part of the Firefighter Safety Plan.
- A Tactical Evaluation Assessment Plan was implemented in 1999 for all target hazards throughout the city to provide additional information on building features in the event of an emergency. This program continued in my administration and is part of the Firefighter Safety Plan.
- High-rise surveys were required to be updated annually in 2002 to improve the emergency information on these buildings and is part of the Firefighter Safety Plan.

- An operational readiness inspection program was implemented in 2003 to assure that firefighters have mastered their standard operating guidelines and can prove knowledge of fire equipment. I have personally tested over 300 firefighters. This is part of the Firefighter Safety Plan.
- A quality assurance program has been implemented in 2003 to review near misses and other emergency incidents to further improve emergency operations. This is part of the Firefighter Safety Plan.
- An incident command school will be initiated in October 2003 to further improve this aspect of emergency operations and is part of the Firefighter Safety Plan.
- HFD has partnered with Crescent Realty in 2003 to conduct monthly high-rise fire simulations in Greenway Plaza. Crescent Realty also installed a fire alarm panel in the HFD drill tower. This will enhance training for our firefighters in these types of incidents. This is part of the Firefighter Safety Plan.
- HFD completed the Integrated Land Management System (ILMS) program in August 2003, a computer-based inspection application that will assist the department's fire inspectors in capturing information necessary to track inspection and permit activities.
- HFD graduated over 700 firefighter trainees over the last three years.
- HFD has sponsored two national symposiums on firefighter safety and survival.
- HFD has hosted the national HotZone Conference since 2001 to discuss issues related to hazardous materials mitigation and weapons of mass destruction.
- Fire Stations 27, 33, 83, and 90 were completed over the past three years. Land will be acquired for Fire Station 37 and the new Downtown Superstation in 2003. The CIP provides funding for construction of Fire Stations 24, 84, 86, 94, and the Downtown Superstation. The CIP also funds expansion of the VJTF.
- HFD's budget increased from \$235,505,851 in FY2001 to \$286,612,067 in FY2004.
- HFD developed a plan and cost analysis to comply with NFPA 1710. This is part of the Firefighter Safety Plan.
- The VJTF conducted multi-company drills simulating weapon of mass destruction incidents over the past three years.
- As part of the Firefighter Safety Plan, HFD mandated that air bottles be kept full to at least 4300 psi and all firefighters utilize one-hour air bottles in high-rise incidents. One-hour bottles were strongly recommended in commercial occupancy fires.

- Classes have been provided to 39 districts on lessons learned from the McDonald's and Four Leaf Tower line of duty death fires to hopefully prevent future firefighter deaths. This represents 47% of all the districts in Emergency Operations representing approximately 1,442 of the 3,069 firefighters in this command. This is also a part of the Firefighter Safety Plan.
- A Crew Resource Management class was funded and begun in 2003 to help reduce mistakes and near misses that will ultimately improve safety for firefighting crews. This is part of the Firefighter Safety Plan.
- A voluntary career development plan was developed, in 2003, to guide members to acquire the appropriate credentials while promoting to officer ranks.
- A pilot group of officers took the Fire Officer I online course in 2003. This program will eventually train all officers to at least the Fire Officer II level over the next three years.
- HFD submitted a Fire Act grant application for \$750,000, in 2003, to acquire a fireground communication system that improves audibility while wearing full protective clothing.
- A Discipline Manual was developed during 2001-2003 to ensure consistent discipline throughout the department and a Discipline Review Committee was established, in 2003, to assure members that discipline was being issued fairly in the organization through periodic reviews.
- An Alternative Dispute Resolution Group will be trained in 2003 to handle disagreements in the workplace among employees and avoid the relationship damage incurred among the members utilizing the formal grievance process.
- The Citizens Fire Academy and subsequent establishment of the Citizens Fire Academy Alumni Group has been hugely successful. Seven classes have been conducted.
- The Emergency Operations Command will implement, in 2003, a fire safety survey for general occupancies to help supplement the efforts of the Fire Prevention Command. Fire crews conduct these surveys to ensure that fire hazards are removed and interface directly with fire inspectors when issues arise.
- Decontamination Task Forces will be established in 2003 to supplement the Houston Medical Strike Team in handling mass casualty events.
- Compressed Air Foam Systems and Class A foam were introduced into HFD, in 2003, to enhance fire suppression operations.

- HFD piloted the Service Stat program, in 2002, to report monthly statistics on various performance measures. This will be expanded citywide.
- A new program was implemented to issue greeting cards, related to new births, congratulations, retirement, and sympathy, to employees from the Fire Chief's Office.
- The Valor Awards Committee is enhancing the annual Medal Day Ceremony acknowledging valor and service excellence among firefighters.
- The Meet the Chief forum was initiated, in 2001, to better improve communication with civilian employees.
- HFD acquired an accelerant detection dog from the ATF, in 2002, to assist with fire investigations.
- The Fire and Arson Investigation Division will partner with HPD, in 2003, to have access to case management software to further improve case clearance rates and information in this division.
- The High-Rise Triad Committee, comprised of HFD, building code officials, and the building owners and property managers of high-rises in the city, was re-instated, in 2000, to maintain an active dialog of improving safety for occupants of these facilities. This committee meets monthly. HFD is not aware of any other cities that have a similar committee and serves as an excellent example for other communities to emulate.
- HFD increased the resources in the High-Rise Inspection Team of Fire Prevention Command in 2001 to ensure that evacuation plans for these buildings are reviewed every two years. This is a significant improvement in service to this sector.